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Kerr, R.B.

How France abolished unemployment

London

[1930?]

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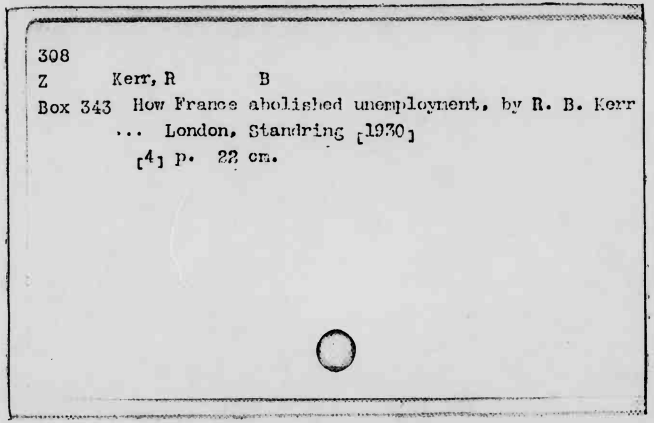

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HOW FRANCE ABOLISHED UNEMPLOYMENT

BY

R. B. KERR, M.A., LL.B.
(EDITOR OF THE "NEW GENERATION.")

308
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Box 343

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How France Abolished Unemployment.

There are 29 countries in Europe, and for many years all but one has been cursed with a terrible burden of unemployment. Every month the "Ministry of Labour Gazette" gives figures of the unemployment in the different countries. Here are the numbers in February, 1930.

Great Britain	...	1,534,000
Germany	...	2,293,734
Italy	...	408,748

France the One Exception.

The one country of the 29 which is free from unemployment is France. It is of course impossible that every man in any country should be at work every day in the year, for there are about ten thousand different occupations, and the demand for each could not always exactly coincide with the supply. In a certain town there may be two bricklayers too few, and one printer too many. In that case there will be one man out of work, and two situations vacant. Also in winter some outdoor occupations have to be stopped in bad weather. But allowing for these very slight disturbances, it is true that France is, and has for many years been, entirely without unemployment. Every week the French Minister of Labour gives a list of the number out of work. Here are the numbers out of work in the whole of France at the end of each month in 1929.

January	...	1,064	July	...	399
February	...	3,257	August	...	403
March	...	1,078	September	...	385
April	...	706	October	...	396
May	...	570	November	...	577
June	...	394	December	...	817

Feb. 3, 1932 DA/Hee

Considering that France has a population of 40 million people, these figures are entirely negligible, and we can justly say that France is free from unemployment. Even in February, which had three times as many out of work as any other month, the number not working was only one in every 12,000 people.

France once had Unemployed.

France has not always been free from unemployment, for in 1792 Arthur Young, travelling in France, wrote: "The predominant evil of the kingdom is the having so great a population that she can neither employ nor feed it." Malthus made the same observation a few years later. But by the middle of the nineteenth century this trouble had vanished, and ever since then France has been able not merely to employ all her own people, but to find work for many immigrants.

How the Change Came.

What made this wonderful change? All Frenchmen, whatever their opinions about it, are agreed that it was done by birth control. In the early part of last century the practice of birth control suddenly began to spread in France, long before any other country knew anything about it. Consequently the population grew very slowly, notwithstanding the immense improvement in material conditions. At the beginning of last century France had 27 million people, and England only 8 millions. Today each country has 40 millions. In other words, the population of England has grown three times as fast as that of France, and England has constantly had to struggle with unemployment, while France has left it behind her for generations. Surely this is a magnificent achievement for birth control!

In 1925 there was a great International Birth Control Congress in New York. All the delegates except one lamented the deplorable condition of unemployment in their respective countries, but the French delegate proudly said :

> " While practically every other country is suffering more or less severely from unemployment and overcrowding, France today has literally no unemployment. Indeed, the demand for labour is such that even old people can easily find employment, and France, in addition to finding work for all her own people, has absorbed nearly 250,000 workers from other countries without any dislocation of industry, or protest on the part of its own people."

The Explanation.

We are sometimes asked to explain in detail just how birth control ended unemployment in France. The explanation is simple.

1. In every industrial country employment is limited by the accumulation of capital and the building of factories. Each year more workers can be employed, but the number is limited. Britain has lately been able to employ about 95,000 more workers each year, but unfortunately the population is increasing at the rate of 200,000 a year, so that we are getting behind instead of ahead. In France, however, the population increases only at the rate of 60,000 a year, and the accumulation of capital provides for more than that. If our population only increased at the French rate, our unemployment would be diminishing every year. If our population became stationary, unemployment would quickly vanish altogether.

2. The slow growth of the French population for over a century enabled her people to remain self-supporting, while Britain and Germany now depend for their existence on selling goods all over the earth, in the teeth of high tariffs and desperate competition. Thus France has control of her own destiny, and can employ her people as she pleases without regard to the state of markets on the other side of the earth.

Such is the explanation, universally accepted by economists, of the freedom of France from unemployment. It is evident that if we follow her example, the result will ere long be equally happy.

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